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ful, that when he and others who were similarly situated, had found an opportunity of telling their story to the people, the foundations of the Bastile began to totter? We are not blind to the inconveniences, abuses and dangers of our political system, but while it gives us a permanent national peace, instead of the wars that constantly desolate Europe, and complete security for person and property, instead of the Bastiles, the bow-strings, — the Leads, — the Siberias, and the star-chambers of the Old World, we shall not seriously quarrel with it, although it should bring out occasionally an ill-tempered essay in the newspapers, or even elect, at times, the wrong man for President.

ART. IV. — *Machiavelli.*

1. *Opere di Niccolò Machiavelli, Cittadino e Segretario Fiorentino. X. Vol. Italia. 1826.*
2. *Machiavel, son génie et ses Erreurs, XI. Tom. Par A. F. ARTAUD. Paris. 1833.*

NICCOLÒ MACHIAVELLI was born at Florence, on the fifth of May, fourteen hundred and sixty-nine, of an ancient and noble family.* His father, Bernardo Machiavelli, traced back his ancestry to the middle of the ninth century, where it became mingled with the race of the ancient Marquesses of Tuscany. His mother was descended from the Counts of Borgo Nuovo of Fucecchio, whose name may be found in the annals of Tuscany, as early as the tenth century. The honor of both families had been supported by a long line of republican dignitaries, and a right to some employment in the service of the state, had become almost hereditary in them. It is probable that the attention of Niccolò, was also directed to a similar line of duty, and that his early habits and tastes were carefully formed for public life. But the meagre and indistinct records, that have been preserved of his youth, throw but a feeble light upon his early history; and all that can be

* The greater part of Machiavelli's history is contained in his familiar letters and official despatches. The most voluminous of his biographers, M. Artaud, has been contented with translating or condensing them. But they still open a rich and noble field, which, with the additions and illustrations that careful research might derive from other sources, would yield an enviable harvest to the diligent historian.

gathered from his own writings, consists of a few brief allusions to his dependence and poverty.*

The disadvantages of this situation must have been compensated, in part, by the peculiar prosperity that was enjoyed at Florence, during the most important portion of this period. He was born in the last year of the mild administration of Piero de' Medici, and the various tumults and struggles, occasioned by the party, that sought to prevent the succession of Giuliano and Lorenzo, had terminated in the unsuccessful conspiracy of the "Pazzi," before he had completed his tenth year. The remainder of his youth was passed under the popular government of Lorenzo the Magnificent, one of those rare and brilliant epochs, in which the genius of the prince encourages the development of mind, while his power is still too feeble to allow him to restrict its freedom. Thus all the influence which can be attributed to a general and elevated taste for literature, when combined with the highest degree of mental activity, may be justly supposed to have acted upon the early character of Machiavelli, and to have concurred, with his natural disposition, in forming those prompt and energetic habits of thought, by which he was so much distinguished during the whole of his career. At the same time, the brilliant festivals and splendid games, with which Lorenzo endeavored to divert the active minds of his fellow-citizens, from too closely observing the course and tendencies of his government, cherished in Machiavelli the fondness for gayer amusements, which served, in his graver years, as a relaxation from public duty, and, during the cloudy decline of life, consoled and cheered the weary moments of languid inaction.

But the first years of his manhood were hardly passed, when the death of Lorenzo de' Medici, at the most critical moment of his country's fortunes, again exposed Florence as a prey to internal jealousies, and an aim for foreign ambition. The noble qualities of Lorenzo were soon forgotten under the puerile administration of his son, and even the wisdom and judgment which had given solidity to his own power, contributed, by contrast, to diminish the authority of his imprudent successor. The rapid invasion of Charles VIII., with the long continued woes, that it drew down, not only upon the devoted object of his ambition, but upon the whole

* *Nacqui povero, ed imparai primo a stentare che a godere.* Lett. al Vettori. Opere, Vol. X. p. 99.

of Italy, and the promptitude with which the Florentines seized this occasion of throwing off their wearisome yoke ; the timid and vacillating conduct of Piero de' Medici ; his cowardly abandonment of the interest and dignity of his country, are facts with which every reader of Italian history is familiar. If our readers, therefore, will carry back their minds to the state of Florence, at this period, both in its internal and its external relations, they will readily perceive that Machiavelli could not have commenced his political career, at a moment that imposed more arduous duties, or required a greater share of energy and skill. *

His first essay in political life, was made under the direction of Marcello di Virgillio, about the year 1494 : but the commencement of his active career must be carried forward nearly five years, to the 19th of June, 1498. This is the date of his first public employment, and some idea may be formed, either of his popularity or of his promise, from the circumstance of his having been chosen from among four competitors, to the office of Chancellor of the second Chancery of the Signoria. During the course of the following month, he received from the "Ten of Liberty and Peace," the appointment which has preserved for him, with posterity, the title of "Secretary of the Florentine Republic."

He seems to have considered this office as a school of practical politics. The intimate relations that subsisted between Florence and the principal powers of Europe, required in its government a greater degree of activity than we should be prepared to expect from so small a state, and gave rise also to many delicate questions that called for the greatest prudence and sagacity in all those to whom the arrangement of them was entrusted. Machiavelli was employed on many of these occasions, † and the rapid development of his political genius

* A satisfactory account of Florence from this period until the death of Machiavelli, may be found in Pignotti, *Storia della Toscana*, Lib. V, or in Guicciardini, though with more detail of the general history of Italy. Of the Florentine historians of this period, Nardi is the most esteemed.

† He was employed in twenty-three foreign embassies, among which were four to the court of France, and two to the Emperor. In addition to these duties, he was charged, on various occasions, with private missions, within the state, and others of still greater importance to the armies of the republic.

No part of Machiavelli's political career has given rise to so much misrepresentation, as his embassy to the Duke Valentino, on the occasion of his rupture with Vitellozzo, Oliverotto and the Orsini. The reader who confines his examination of this period to the narrations of Roscoe and some

may be easily traced in his extensive correspondence with the heads of his government. The numerous letters of which it is composed, may be justly classed among the most instructive portions of his writings. Embracing an extensive range of topics, and prepared in various and widely different situations, they are marked with all the peculiarities which distinguish the character of the author. His political judgment seems gradually to extend from simple and faithful description, to skilful details and sagacious conjectures. As he advances in the practice of his duties, his descriptions acquire greater force, and we meet, from time to time, brief and powerful generalizations, that discover the increasing vigor and range of his thought. Circumstances, events, characters, assume a new life

other modern historians, will be led to concur in the darkest views of the character of Machiavelli. An attentive perusal of the original documents, will lead to a very different conclusion. The perilous situation of the Florentine republic exerted, at this moment, a peculiar influence upon her policy; and the friendship of Borgia and of Alexander, instead of forming a question of general interest or of probable advantage, could easily decide the destruction or preservation of the state. It was under such circumstances that Machiavelli was despatched to the court of Borgia. The history of his embassy is fully detailed in his official correspondence; but the master-piece of treachery, by which Borgia secured his vengeance upon greater villains than himself, is also related in a separate letter, which, originally either formed a part of the despatches, or was prepared, like the other historical fragments, to be interwoven in the continuation of the Florentine Histories. That Machiavelli, far from assisting to devise the treachery of Borgia, had no knowledge of his intentions with regard to Vitellozzo and his associates, is evident from the whole course of his letters. It appears from these, that the Duke never confided his plans even to his favorite counsellors: that his probable conduct was, on this occasion, a subject of general conjecture: Machiavelli gives his own, and inclines to suspect the seeming reconciliation of Borgia and his enemies. It appears also that Borgia, instead of seeking the advice of Machiavelli, never admitted him to an audience except when new despatches from Florence rendered it impossible to refuse, and the conversation at these interviews is fully related. V. the Leg. al Duca Valent, particularly from the letter of the 23d of October, to the end of the Legation.

They who blame him for not having returned immediately upon the discovery of Borgia's crime, apart from the new principle which they establish for ambassadors, fall into two errors: they forget that he had repeatedly solicited a recall, and been ordered to remain, — V. pp. 189. 192. 231, of Leg. al D. Val. Opp. Vol. VIII; secondly, that the state of roads and country rendered all passing difficult and dangerous, — some of his own despatches were lost, — pp. 274. 286. There was no possibility of his escaping to Florence. For general accounts, v. Guiccard. Vol. III, p. 78, ed. of Pisa, 1819. The note at the bottom should be compared with Roscoe, Leo X., V. I, pp. 446. 454. Every sincere admirer of Roscoe, — and we are proud to be classed in the number, — must regret the facility, with which, in all that relates to Machiavelli, he has abandoned his usual course of careful thought and original investigation.

Ginguené's observations should be compared with his own embassy at Turin. — V. Botta Storia d'Italia, del 1789, Lib. XV.

under his pen, and the scenes and interests of the age, with all the doubts and hopes and anxious conjectures, which agitated hearts that have long been cold, seem to return like the cares and feelings of the present. It was in the exercise of these, more, perhaps, than in that of any of his other duties, that he acquired the art of selecting from the mass of mingled events, the particular facts that gave form and feature to history.

The confidence and favor, with which Machiavelli was viewed by his government, are evident from the free recourse that was had to his services upon all important occasions. Scarcely was he returned from one embassy, when he was directed to prepare for another, and the most important negotiations with foreign powers were followed by difficult and confidential commissions within the territories of the republic. During the whole course of his public life, his duties required a constant state of activity and preparation, that would have exhausted the energies of any common mind. It was only while within the walls of Florence, that his situation seems to have been ill adapted to his character. But even there he found a compensation, and the familiar knowledge that he acquired of the nature and relations of the government, and of its adaptation to the character of the people, prepared his mind for the clear and vigorous views of the Florentine histories. Society, also, had many charms for his hours of occasional leisure, and poetry, "filled up each languid pause with the finer joys" of a rich and classic imagination.

In this succession of active duties, fourteen years of his life passed rapidly away ; and although he never advanced so far as to acquire any direct share in the conduct of the public councils, his sagacity and judgment were constantly employed in all important emergencies and difficult negotiations. But at length, a new storm began to gather above the devoted walls of Florence, and the timid and vacillating policy of a single chief,* again drew down upon his country and himself the ruin that firmness and energy might have easily averted. The government, by which Machiavelli had been employed, was overthrown by the arms of Spain, and the family of the Medici, like the Bourbons of our own days, returned to their native walls, under the protection of a foreign ally.

No sooner was the new government firmly established, than

* Piero Soderini, who had been made Gonfaloniere for life.

it commenced the usual train of persecutions against the partisans of the old. Three decrees were passed against Machiavelli, within the course of ten days. By the two first he was deprived of office, and condemned to a year's banishment from the Florentine territory: but the third, as if proceeding upon maturer deliberation, or procured under the influence of more friendly feelings, exchanged the sentence of banishment to a simple prohibition from entering the "Public Palace." Fear and suspicion followed the secretary into his retirement, and his faithful adherence to the republic was considered as a proof of hatred against her new rulers. Notwithstanding his thorough knowledge of the character of his enemies, he knew not how to adapt himself to his change of situation. He had studied the movements of government too long, to withdraw his eyes, at once, from this favorite subject of contemplation, and he continued his observations with the same boldness and freedom, that he had indulged during his own public career.* The jealous apprehensions of government, which a more guarded line of conduct might have easily allayed, were strengthened by this ill-timed and imprudent boldness; and when, in the course of the following year, an extensive conspiracy was accidentally discovered, he was immediately arrested as a fitting object of suspicion. The torture was, at that period, indiscriminately employed in all cases of arrest, and the conviction, that a free and open course of justice would have failed to procure, was often wrung from the agonized confessions of an innocent victim. Six † shocks of the cord were inflicted upon Machiavelli, with fruitless cruelty, and not a word escaped him in the bitterness of his agony, that could be wrested into a confession of guilt, or serve as an accusation against others. Unable to convict him, they could still torment; and accordingly, buried in the depths of a loathsome dungeon, his lacerated body closely bound with chains, and his mind distracted by the cries of misery and of degradation, that reached him from every side, he was left to the long torture of solitude and suspense. Here, also, his fortitude remained unshaken, and his noble power of patient endurance

* Even after his imprisonment, he writes thus to his friend, Francesco Vettori: Pure se io vi potessi parlare, non potrei fare che io non vi empessi il capo di castellucci, perchè la fortuna ha fatto che non sapendo ragionare nè dell'arte della seta, nè dell'arte della lana, nè de' guadagni, nè della perdite, e mi conviene ragionare dello stato, e mi bisogna botarmi di star cheto, o ragionar di questo. — Opp. Vol. X, p. 102.

† Con sei tratti di fune in sulle spalle, &c. Sonn. a Giuliano de' Medici.

baffled the snares of his adversaries, and wearied their malignity. Even the sonnets, which he addressed to Giuliano de' Medici, for the avowed purpose of exciting his interest, breathe an elevated and independent tone, and contain a degree of humorous expostulation and description, which could not have proceeded from a mind broken or humbled by misfortune. The friends, whose affection he had gained, during the days of his prosperity, gave, in these moments of trial, the surest testimony to his worth and their own sincerity; and several lucky circumstances combining to favor their exertions, he was restored to freedom, after a short but rigorous confinement. *

It was not, however, to return to his favorite occupations, that Machiavelli issued from his dungeon. A long course of bitter trial still awaited him; poverty, with its anxious schemes and depressing cares, the excitements of hope, the bitterness of repeated disappointment, and, more than all, the restless movements of a mind that nature had formed for constant exertion, and long habit had rendered incapable of repose. But the resources that his fortune denied, were, in part, supplied by his own exertions. Anxious to open a way of return to public life, on which he depended not only for enjoyment, but for the means of support, he composed and presented to Lorenzo de' Medici, the "Treatise of the Prince," in which he had endeavored to embody the results of his observations upon the governments of his own times, and of his study of the political doctrines of the ancients. † The object for which he

* It will not be uninteresting to observe the manner in which Machiavelli speaks of these events, for it shews, both how he prized his Roman fortitude, and that the simplicity with which he relates the remarkable events of history, was a part of his character.

To F. Vettori, he writes: Io sono uscito di prigione con letizia universale di questa città. Nè vi replicherò la lunga istoria di questa mia disgrazia; ma vi dirò solo che la sorte ha fatto ogni cosa per farmi questa ingiuria, pure per grazia di Dio ella è passata. Spero non c'incorrere più, sì perchè sarò più cauto, sì perchè i tempi saranno più liberali e non tanto sospettosi. — Opp. Vol. X, p. 97. In another letter: E quanto al volgere il viso alla fortuna, voglio che abbiate di questi miei affari questo piacere che gli ho portati tanto francamente che io stesso mene voglio bene e parmi essere da più che non credetti. — p. 99. To a friend who complained of his long silence: A che ti rispondo, che io ho avuto dopo la tua partita tante brighe che non è maraviglia che io non ti abbia scritto anzi è piuttosto miracolo che io sia vivo, perchè mi è suto tolto l'ufizio e sono stato per perdere la vita, la quale Idio e l'innocenza mia mi ha salvata; tutti gli altri mali e di prigione ed'altro ho sopportato, pure io sto con la grazia di Dio bene e mi vengo vivendo come io posso, &c. — p. 121, ubi sup.

† This long disputed fact is placed beyond all doubt by a letter to F. Vettori, which was unknown to the early editors. — V. Op. V. X, p. 149. It is also published in Pignotti, Stor. della Tosc. V. Vol. p. 269. In all but the latest editions of Machiavelli, it is wanting.

had written failed, but a nobler end was obtained. He had commenced the train of thought, which was to lead him to the discovery of so many important truths, and his active mind could not rest on the threshold of the temple that it had opened. Step by step he was led on to a more attentive examination of his principles, new truths were discovered, some erroneous views were brought out in their true light by wider application and more exact comparison, and the undertaking which had originated in a strong desire for public life, became the chief source of his enjoyments, and was continued with regular and progressive improvement until the last moment of his existence.

These studies, however, were not sufficient to furnish constant occupation for a spirit like his, and the intervals of severe labor were partly filled up with the composition of his comedies, his translations, and various lighter pieces, both in prose and in verse. But many moments still remained, which, for a mind that sought relief in a variation of duties, rather than in actual repose, were wearisome blanks in existence. In such moments his spirit seemed to break, and his fortitude to forsake him, and it is impossible to read his expressions of passionate discontent, * — complaints that had never been suffered to escape him in prison and in torture, — without feeling how much easier it is to meet the most violent persecutions of the world, than to support the long trial of ingratitude and neglect.

At length, the gradual progress of his literary reputation began to prepare the way for a return to public life. His correspondence with Vettori, the Florentine ambassador at Rome, had been communicated to Leo X., and that Pontiff, a liberal if not a judicious patron of learning, had, from time to time, encouraged the solitary labors of Machiavelli, by various marks of his favor and his regard. He caused him to be consulted upon many important questions, and drew from him, through the medium of Vettori, many admirable views concerning the most interesting events of the period. At last, throwing aside the veil under which he had covered his communications with Machiavelli, the Pope invited him to prepare a plan for the government of Florence. This was shortly followed by a mission,† of but little moment in itself, but of great importance to

* See, for example, pp. 171. 196, Vol. X.

† His correspondence with Guicciardini, during this mission, presents a very amusing picture of these grave historians. V. M. Op. Vol. X., pp. 199, to 207, inclusive.

him, as an earnest of a recall to his favorite occupations. But another blow seemed to await him at the first revival of his hopes, and before any fixed establishment had assured him of the permanence of his restoration to favor, Leo X. was suddenly cut off in the prime of his career. Thus deprived of a protector, who, although slow to grant him confidence, had been ready to acknowledge his merit, Machiavelli remained for a short time in the greatest uncertainty. Another mission, however, of a more important nature, was soon confided to him by one of the principal corporations of the city, and while engaged at Venice in the negotiations for its fulfilment, he received the welcome tidings that his name had been once more inserted among those of the citizens that were held eligible to office.

The successor of Leo did not long continue to enjoy his dignity; and upon his death, the Cardinal de' Medici was elevated to the papal chair, with the title of Clement VII. In him Machiavelli found a firm and constant protector, and the most important portion of his political career now opened before him. The experience of his early life had been matured by a long course of study, and he returned to the field of his youthful exploits, with a skill perfected by assiduous labor, and an influence strengthened and extended by the splendor of his literary reputation.* It is not, without regret, that we pass over the details of this period; for the profound judgment, the quick perception, the thorough knowledge of human nature, which distinguish the character of Machiavelli, appear in his later negotiations united with an unvarying boldness of purpose and energy of mind, which shew how well he was formed by nature to govern the mighty movements, which fortune had condemned him simply to contemplate and record. Melancholy, however, was the scene on which he was employed: war and unbridled barbarity without, the horrors of a destructive pestilence, with terror and contention within. But the fulness of these calamities was hidden from his view, and before the half of his dark anticipations had been realized, he sunk a prey to the united efforts of disease, exhaustion, and grief, on the 22d of June, 1527.

None of the works of Machiavelli were printed during his life; but the copies which had been prepared for the use of

* — Che vedi quanto onore fa a me un poco di virtù che io ho. Lett. al figlio. Op. Vol. X, p. 257.

his friends, or of the patrons to whom particular portions were dedicated, had been freely circulated in manuscript both in Florence and in Rome. Within a few years, however, after his death, all his larger works were printed, and obtaining extensive circulation, soon gave rise to that violent controversy which has been continued, with very little increase of judgment, or diminution of virulence, during the course of three centuries.* The first to commence this warfare against the supposed doctrines of Machiavelli, was the celebrated Cardinal Pole, who, in his conversation and in his writings, assailed with great vehemence the principles of the "Prince." This attack was followed, in a few years, by a violent dissertation of the Bishop Caterino Politi. A French protestant, Innocent Gentiletto, next entered the lists, and undertook, in an extensive latin treatise, to refute one by one the obnoxious doctrines. The warfare, thus commenced, was continued with a virulence of which it is difficult to find the parallel; and men of every class and of opposite principles, princes and their subjects, statesmen and theologians, the blindest partizans of absolute power and the most enthusiastic champions of freedom of opinion, have united in the reproach, and confirmed the condemnation.

Amid the violence of controversy there is little room for the cool decisions of judgment. The contest for truth can hardly be carried on without awakening the pride of human reason; and no sooner does this feeling become excited on either side, than the antagonists, like foes, at the decisive moment of battle, lose every other sentiment in the eager desire of success. Thus, in the Machiavellian controversy, what was first advanced as a sincere opinion, was at last maintained as a point of character. Each successive writer readily adopted the assertions of his party, and enlarged them with comments and deductions of his own. Detached sentences, idle rumors, the vile inventions of party spirit, usurped the place of historical documents, until the mass of falsehood and calumny became accumulated to a degree that almost baffled the honest exertions of patient research.

It was impossible, however, that some should not be found among the higher intellects of every age, who were able to un-

*A very able sketch of this controversy, may be found in the learned preface to the edition of Machiavelli, to which we have referred above. A full and satisfactory history is given in the second volume of Artaud, p. 287, and seq.

derstand and appreciate the genius of Machiavelli. By some many of his views have been silently adopted, without any acknowledgment of the source from which they were drawn; others have been contented with a passing comment, while a few have boldly advanced into the arena, and warmly engaged in the defence both of his writings and of his character. But unfortunately for the success of these last, they seem to have thought it necessary for his vindication, that some mystic reason should be assigned for the composition of the Prince, and have thus been led to form contradictory and improbable theories, which they have supported with all the force of argument and the zeal of controversy. Some have discovered in the Prince a bold and faithful picture of a tyrant, prepared, not to guide the steps of a monarch, but to enlighten the minds of his subjects.* To others it has seemed a cunning and deep laid snare, coolly formed for the destruction of the Medici. While a few, struck with the evident discordance between some parts of the Prince and the other works of Machiavelli, and exaggerating the satirical cast of particular portions of his writings, have supposed him to have been a disappointed spirit, whose pictures of life were shaded with the darkness of his own misanthropy.

All these opinions seem equally extravagant, and have, indeed, little foundation either in the character of Machiavelli, or in the common principles of human nature. A picture prepared for the people, would hardly have been consigned to the custody of a single individual, and least of all to that of him who would have the most to apprehend from its publicity. A long life devoted to some single and distant object, with views extending into futurity, — toils and snares, prepared to act at some far off and uncertain period, — these may be found more easily in the dreams of romance than in the sober annals of actual history. The last theory, — the supposition that his works contain a satirical picture of life, — although grounded by its advocates upon his character and the cast of some of his writings, is fully refuted by the general features of both. Rarely, indeed, will it be found, that skilful and subtle theories can be applied to the motives of human action.

* Rousseau, — *Cont. Soc. Oeuv.* Tom. V. p. 204. D'Alembert seems to have thought the same form of apology necessary, in order to explain some parts of the *Spirit of Laws*, Vol. Anal. de l'*Esp. des Lois pour servir de suite à l'éloge de Mons. de Montesqu.* Oeuv. Tom. I, p. 104.

But, at last, the moment arrived which was to furnish a surer guide to his real views, and the defence was to proceed from the best interpreter of the feelings and motives of every man, — his own correspondence. The diligence and zeal which have always characterized the scholars of Italy, had never been directed to an examination of the manuscripts of Machiavelli, and, as if the ingratitude that embittered his life had not sufficed, the only pieces which could afford a full refutation of the calumnies of his enemies, were suffered to moulder in neglect, while dusty *codices*, and even whole libraries, were searched to discover a new reading, or establish a disputed passage in the Decameron. The first of his inedited essays that was brought to light, was a small dialogue upon the Italian language, which was published by Giovanni Bottari, in 1730. After an interval of thirty years, the discourse addressed to Leo X. upon the government of Florence, with several letters of great interest and importance, were discovered in the Gaddian library, and published in the city of Lucca. Other discoveries soon followed, and shortly after the publications at Lucca, his official despatches to the Florentine government were recovered, and his important services as a faithful and confidential ambassador of the Republic, were, for the first time, established upon full and incontrovertible documents. These writings, so important to the character of their author, and so interesting in a country where literary curiosity is carried to an extent that can hardly be conceived in America, excited the attention of the Florentine literati to the highest degree, and gave rise to a careful preparation of a new edition of his works. This was partly accomplished in 1782; but new discoveries in the following years led to a more exact collection by the same editors, and it was not until the commencement of the present century, that the presses of Italy began to multiply fuller and more correct editions of the works of their greatest philosopher.

Nothing could be more striking than the new aspect in which Machiavelli now appeared; the dark coloring with which calumny had surrounded him, has passed away; he comes before us as the dignified and faithful ambassador of his country, the innocent and unbending victim of arbitrary power, the versatile genius, who, by the energies of his own mind, reopened the path, which an unrelenting destiny had closed be-

fore him. We seem to have met with some familiar friend, who brings us into the privacy of his domestic life, and while he amuses our curiosity with characteristic anecdotes, discovers at every step the excellence of his heart and the fervor of his affections.

But one of the most important consequences which result from these discoveries, is the view which they give of the writings of Machiavelli, as a series of connected studies, and of principles progressively formed, illustrated and corrected.* Conjecture and theory concerning the motives which guided him are thus rendered comparatively useless, and the question becomes reduced to a simple examination of the final principles in which all his labors were terminated. The Prince then resumes its place as the earliest and most imperfect result of his studies, while the Discourses and Florentine Histories, in which he has retracted the greater part of what was false in the Prince, become the true standards of his character and of his principles. For, if what has once seemed truth, may be rejected by deeper and maturer thought, and the memory be freed from the stain which the promulgation of error has left behind; if the mind, when reposing on the higher places of the temple, may look back upon the pathway, which it has trodden in its upward progress, and correct the false and erroneous views, which it formed, while its vision was bounded by mists and obscured by darkness, then is it from his ultimate conclusions alone, that the character and principles of a writer should be judged.

A full justification, therefore, of the character of Machiavelli would require an extensive examination and accurate analysis of all his writings. The limits, however, of the present article will only admit of an imperfect sketch of his three principal works.

The first in order of time, is the treatise, which commentators and editors have distinguished by the improper title of the Prince, but which was indiscriminately called by its author, *A Treatise of monarchical governments, — of Princes*, or simply *of the Prince*.† His object in this treatise, was

* Artaud has been the first to perceive this connection.

† Disputes concerning titles are seldom worthy of much attention, — but the editors seem, in this instance, to have adopted the title which favored most the idea so strongly supported by some, that this work was designed as a model for tyrants. Vide Artaud.

to describe the nature and resources of some of the common forms of absolute monarchy, in the same manner in which he afterwards described in the Discourses the character of republican governments. The commencement of the work shews with sufficient precision, the point of view under which he proposed to consider his subject.

He divides monarchies into different classes, according to the nature of their origin. Some are hereditary, — others the fruit of conquest. Here, also, we find a new division, for the conquered territory may be an addition to an original patrimony, or it may be the first step of an ambitious leader towards absolute power. In every case, the conquest is the effect either of arms, of fortune, or of individual talent, as the people over whom it is made have been accustomed to a free or to a monarchical government.

From these original distinctions arise peculiar relations between the prince and the subject, which, in turn, require from the prince peculiar modes of government, varying in difficulty according to the origin of his power.

Having thus explained the ground of his classification, he enters into a full examination of the distinctions that he has made; he explains the nature and degree of the difficulties against which princes have to contend, in each situation; he shews how they may be avoided, or in what manner they may best be overcome, and illustrates his observations by clear and animated sketches, from ancient and modern history.

He next examines with equal fulness of detail, the modes of offence and defence, which are common to these different forms of government. He, here, first assumes as an undeniable truth, that good laws and good arms are the principal foundations of every state, and then proceeding to explain the nature of the different kinds of troops, he describes in powerful language the destruction that inevitably follows all reliance upon mercenary or auxiliary power. Few men of the present day will deny the justness of his conclusions, or refuse their admiration to the warmth with which he traces the destructive progress of the power of the *condottieri*, and the abandonment of a citizen soldiery; but every reader that is familiar with the military history of Italy, will perceive that in these chapters, Machiavelli was contending against one of the strongest prejudices of his age.

The remainder of the work, with the exception of a few

pages, is devoted to an examination of some of the personal qualities of a prince. True morality will unhesitatingly condemn two of the principles that he admits, — dissimulation and a disregard of faith, when its observance is opposed to the true interests of the state; but the practice of every government, not only in ancient but in modern times, and even in our own golden period of moral profession, presents a striking commentary upon the text of Machiavelli. Most of the other principles of these chapters are above all reproach. A prince should be economical, for economy not only contributes to his means of success, but preserves him from the necessity of becoming the oppressor of his subjects. He should be severely just, for although rigid justice is often mistaken for cruelty, it is still the surest path to mercy. If compelled to choose between the fear and the love of his subjects, he should guard against their hatred, by a cautious observance of their rights, and by never departing from the laws of the strictest justice; but, in all cases, he should constantly remember, that the love of the people is the only protection of the ruler. He should preserve respect for religion, should cultivate boldness and decision of character, — should studiously avoid the corruptions of flattery, and labor to secure the free advice of wise and experienced counsellors. Enterprise and industry should be encouraged; the development of genius should be promoted by a wise distribution of rewards and privileges; and, finally, by the institution of public festivals and games, the ruler should endeavor to diffuse throughout his dominions, a spirit of gaiety and contentment.

The Discourses on the first Decade of Livy, which followed the composition of the Prince, after the interval of a year, were written, partly in order to develop the author's views concerning some principles of republican government, and partly in compliance with the request of his friends, Buondelmonti and Buccellai, in the latter of whose gardens they are said to have been recited to the young men of Florence. They are divided into three books, with a subdivision of chapters. In each book, the most interesting events of the first Decade are considered under a particular point of view. The first book is devoted to an examination of the domestic government of Rome; the second, to that of the means by which the power of the republic was extended and preserved without the city; while the third passes in review, one by one, particular

actions of private individuals, in order to examine their influence upon the progress of power, and upon the moral character of the nation. In each chapter of these books, some fact of the first Decade is treated with more or less fulness of detail, according to the degree of its importance, and in most of them the author endeavors to arrive at some general principle for the government of his own times. The most important of these principles are supported by parallel facts of contemporaneous history; and throughout the whole work, he labors to prove that the revolutions of power in every age have depended upon causes which were similar in themselves, although variously modified by circumstances peculiar to the nation or the period. His deductions are, in most cases, strictly logical, and the conduct and development of his arguments, clear, rapid and strong. New ideas arise at every instant under his pen, and he scatters over the mind, as he advances, the seeds of vigorous and active thought. The reader, whose study of legislation has been confined to the works of later philosophers, will be surprised to meet in the Discourses many principles and observations, the acuteness and profundity of which, he has been accustomed to admire in the more pretending pages of his modern oracles.* The extent and variety of the subject naturally lead to a review of some of the doctrines of the Prince, and a careful comparison of both works will show how far the views of the author had changed, concerning some of the principles that debase the former. A few, but a very few, were too deeply rooted in the character,—might we not say, in the necessities of the age?

In neither, however, of these works, does Machiavelli attempt to give a full treatise of legislation. They contain important developments of particular principles, which he possessed neither the leisure nor the means to combine, and by filling up the vacant spaces, and nicely adjusting the separate parts, to form into a complete and regular system. Such a work would undoubtedly have given a different character to his earlier writings, and secured him, in part, from the deep obloquy under which his name has so unjustly lain. But it cannot be supposed that a perfect system of legislation could have been

* Historians also have found this a convenient foraging ground, and more than one modern classic shines in the plumage of Machiavelli.

formed even by the noblest genius of such an age.* The progress of society, the development of civilization in the sixteenth century, afforded not the facts upon which such a system could be founded. The principles of constitutional monarchy, the great laws of individual right, were unknown. The government of France, so highly commended by some writers of that period, was little better than a division of arbitrary power, in which the interests of the many were sacrificed to the caprices of the few. The constitution of England was slowly forming amid the jealousies and struggles of contending parties; but what contemporaneous eye could discern, in the shapeless fragments of the sixteenth century, the beautiful fabric which became the admiration and envy of the eighteenth? Political truths are the results of the study and analysis of past events; every age contributes, more or less, to the collection, in proportion to the degree of its advancement in civilization; constitutional monarchy was the legacy of the seventeenth century; constitutional republics, on the broadest scale, were the discovery of the eighteenth; political economy, the doctrines of criminal law, are daily advancing toward perfection, and who can tell what seeds of unknown truth are ripening with them, amid the comparative peace and tranquillity of our own age? It was no greater step in France, from the iron sceptre of Lewis the Great, to the constitutional throne of Lewis Philip, than from the present state of political science, to some degree of perfection that we know not of. Where, then, will be the vaunted systems of our own days? Where the discoveries of our philosophy? Mingled with the mass of earlier systems, where each, divested of its imagined perfection, will contribute its respective share of truth, to swell the progressive science of ages.

Viewing this subject as we do, it is for us, rather a source of congratulation than of regret, that the attention of Machiavelli was confined to particular portions of political science. The politics of his own age are thus explained, with clearness and precision; the received opinions of antiquity are connected with those of the earlier periods of modern civilization, and while the utility of some parts is limited to the light which

* Le plus rare génie est toujours en rapport avec les lumières de ses contemporains et l'on doit calculer, à-peu-près, de combien la pensée d'un homme peut dépasser les connoissances de son temps. De Stael—De la Littérature. Tom. I, p. 93.

they throw upon history, others are filled with those great and permanent truths, which are addressed to the statesman of every nation and of every age.

It was not until several years after the termination of the Discourses, that Machiavelli entered upon a new field, in his Florentine Histories. A great portion, however, of this interval was employed in the studies and observations, that were essential to the accomplishment of his design, and his former labors, both as an author, and as secretary to the republic, had prepared him to engage in the task with bolder and more elevated views than had guided the steps of any preceding historian. His original design was confined to the history of Florence, from the rise of the power of the Medici, until his own times; but an attentive examination of the works of the earlier historians of the republic, convinced him that the most important portion of its history had been passed over in comparative silence.* The external wars of Florence contained, in his view, none of the important lessons which make history the surest school of wisdom. It was in the detail of the civil feuds and domestic revolutions of his country, that he sought the secrets of her prosperity, and the causes of her decline; it was only, therefore, by a full and faithful delineation of these, that he could accomplish the great end which he proposed.

Accordingly, departing from his original plan, he first traces, in a rapid and animated narrative, the revolutions which followed in swift succession throughout every part of Italy, from the reign of Theodosius, until the termination of the papal schism at the Council of Constance. The history that he is preparing to relate, is thus connected with the history of the fall of the Empire, and by following the progress of the states, which are so intimately associated with Florentine history, we are enabled to understand the causes of many peculiar features in the character and revolutions of the latter.† He then retraces the ground over which his predecessors had so carelessly trod, and describes, with well apportioned fulness of detail, the domestic history of the republic, from the foundation of the city, until the rise of the Medici, in fourteen hundred thirty-

* Vide la Prefazione alle Storie Fiorentine — pass.

† This form of introduction is supposed to have suggested to Robertson, the idea of his beautiful introduction to Charles V.

four, interweaving with his narration such portions of external history as serve by their connexion, to throw a clearer light upon the events that he was relating. From this last period, both the internal and external history are united in a full narrative, which extends to the death of Lorenzo the Magnificent, in fourteen hundred and ninety-two.

The merit of acute and vigorous thought, which characterizes all the productions of Machiavelli, is enhanced, in the Florentine Histories, by the skill with which he arranges his subject and conducts his narration. The transitions are generally easy and natural, and the charm of the narrative is preserved by the peculiar art with which he interweaves his generalization with the facts from which it proceeds, and sometimes even with the sentence that records it. For the most important, however, of these remarks, a particular place has been reserved at the commencement of each book, where they serve as a general introduction to the portion that follows. Some of the most interesting questions are here treated with an energy and justness of thought, which surpass anything in even the best chapters of the Discourses, and with the peculiar and powerful logic, which distinguishes all the works of Machiavelli. If it were possible to judge a mind like his by detached passages and fragments of his general train of thought, no part of his writings could be selected with so much propriety, as the introductions to the books of the Florentine Histories.

No work, if we except the Decameron of Boccaccio, has exercised upon Italian prose, the same degree of influence as this. But while Boccaccio, misguided by his veneration for the Latin, labored to form his style upon the arbitrary inversions and periodic sentences of the Roman classics, Machiavelli, with a juster appreciation of the genius of the Italian, adopted a simpler and more pleasing course, equally free from the inversions of the fourteenth century and the gallicisms of the eighteenth. The language of the purer writers of Italy has continued to our own times, as it was left them by Machiavelli, and his works possess nearly the same freshness of expression, which characterizes in our own language, the prose of Dryden and of Addison.*

* Aveano fissato la lingua; — mentre sono appassiti tanti scrittori, anche assai a lui posteriori, lo stile di Machiavelli si mantiene dopo circa a tre secoli fresco, come nacque, e le frasi di cui fece uso, sono quelle che ancora si adoperano. Pignotti Sto. della Tosc. Vol. VI, p. 18.

The Art of War was composed before the completion of the Florentine Histories. Like many of the works of the ancient philosophers, it is written in the form of a dialogue, in which the principles of the science are developed by the chief interlocutor, while an air of easy vivacity is spread over the whole piece, by the questions and remarks of the others. The merit of this work has been placed in a clear light by the letters of Count Algarotti, and when we reflect that they were written at the court of Frederick the Great, by a man cherished and honored for the brilliancy of his own genius, we shall ask no higher testimony to the military genius of Machiavelli.

It is a singular step from the gravity of the historian and the profound reasonings of the statesman, to the airy dreams of poetry and the keenness of comic wit. But were anything more than a general outline compatible with the plan of the present paper, we should now be called to trace the steps of Machiavelli in these new and difficult paths. Poetry was for him both a solace and a recreation, and many of the productions of his muse are strongly marked with the feelings that inspired them. He sought relief in his lyre from the stings of envy and the relentlessness of persecution, and when wearied with deeper and graver thought, refreshed his mind and restored his strength by the cheerful creations of fancy. In comedy he continued, under another form, his favorite study of man, and although the subsequent progress of the art has given greater perfection to the development of plot and to the general management of character, no writer has ever surpassed him in comic power and in faithfully portraying the follies and vices of his age. Nor are these portions of his writings less strongly marked with his original and peculiar character. Energy, vivacity and profound knowledge of human nature are the most striking characteristics of the poet, of the comic writer and of the statesman.*

The style of Machiavelli is of a kind, of which foreigners

* ——— il viver mal contento
 Pel dente dell' invidia, che mi morde,
 Mi darebbe più doglia e più tormento;
 Se non fusse che ancor le dolci corde
 D'una mia cetra che soave suona,
 Fanno le muse al mio cantar non sorde.

Capit. dell' Ingratitudine, Op. Vol. VII, p. 372.

can in part, perceive and appreciate the beauty.* Uniting the excellencies of clearness and conciseness, with great vigor of expression, and perfect harmony of arrangement, it conveys the ideas of the writer with a force and precision which make the deepest impression upon the memory, while they leave no room for misapprehension. His words and phrases are peculiarly appropriate, and have that graceful elegance which always results from a skilful use of idioms. There are no labored expressions, no nicely wrought sentences, but the whole moves on, plain and concise in argument, clear and animated in description, nervous and powerful in declamation, warming with the feelings of the writer, and reflecting every shade of his thoughts.

His descriptions are rich and varied. They are at times perfect pictures, in which every detail is carefully wrought up, with appropriate distinctness and keeping; at others, brief sketches, in which a few prominent traits, selected with the instinctive delicacy of genius, form a perfect outline of parts, and seem to indicate the rest. In every case they carry the mind forward with constantly increasing excitement, and produce the peculiar and powerful agitation with which we always draw nigh to the termination of some great catastrophe.

He seldom indulges in declamation, but whenever his feelings become particularly excited, his thoughts and images flow with a warmth and energy which show how well he was qualified to excel in this species of eloquence. He describes the events of history, whether marked by great virtues or debased

* This style, however, so easy and natural in appearance, was the result of assiduous labor and repeated correction. Some highly interesting conjectures concerning his method of study, may be formed upon the historical fragments. They consist of a continuation of the Florentine Histories; the narrative is clear and closely connected, the events of each year are described with distinctness and precision, but the style is marked with all the haste and negligence of a first draft. The sketches of character, which are so beautifully polished in the Histories, form separate fragments and seem to have been prepared with greater care. It is more than probable, that the description of the death of the Orsini and their associates was also written to be inserted in a further continuation of the Histories.

It would seem, therefore, that he first prepared a general sketch of his works, confining his attention to the collection and arrangement of his facts: that the sketches of character and most important descriptions, were often composed separately from the first draft of the body of the work, and interwoven with it in the course of correction; and finally that the simplicity and graceful elegance which give such a charm to his style were, as generally happens, the effect of close attention and frequent revisal.

by glaring crimes, with a clearness and truth, which reproduce the whole scene in the mind of the reader. But all comments upon the moral character of the event, all expression either of blame or of approbation are repressed, or, if admitted, are expressed in brief sentences or in short comments connected with the narration of the fact. The same manner may be observed in his reasoning: the subject is stated with clearness and precision, his arguments and illustrations follow in rapid succession, but all passing remarks, all amplification and declamation are left to the imagination of the reader.* Many critics, without observing that the same peculiar simplicity is invariably used in speaking of his own interests and misfortunes, have thought that it indicated, in the mind of the writer, a total indifference to good and evil. But this moral insensibility in the highest order of intellect, is more frequently imagined than found. The volume, from which we arise with a stronger inclination to the practice of virtue, a warm admiration for the noble and lovely in moral excellence, and a profound abhorrence of the sacrifice of the interests of many to the pleasure of an individual, can hardly have been produced by a mind wholly blunted to moral feeling. As different minds have different forms of expression, so have they different ways of conveying their lessons of virtue. The moral feeling that arises from the reading of Machiavelli, lies far deeper than the surface of his narrative; it is produced by an attentive study of the whole, instead of being gaudily painted on each single part: it breaks not out in frequent and loud bursts of applause, but winds itself slowly and surely among the secret places of the heart; and the reader, although frequently unconscious of the impression that he has received, finds it mingling, like the first lessons of youth, with the whole course and character of his subsequent reflections.

Some also, have supposed, that Machiavelli had studied in preference the dark policy of his own times. We will not now stop to examine in what degree the writers of every age are influenced by the peculiar character of their own, or how far it is important for a public man, who seeks to be useful, to examine and understand the materials upon which he is to act; but we believe that a careful examination of the writings of

* This of course, is applied to his usual manner, for several beautiful exceptions might be pointed out.

Machiavelli, will show that his favorite school was in the best ages of ancient history. The most eloquent passages of his writings are those in which he describes the effect of free institutions and virtuous example upon the character of a nation. Take for example the short description of the sunny days of the Antonines :* how bright the colors, how strong the contrasts, how warm and glowing the whole design ! It is the out-breathing of a pure and virtuous soul, forced from its path of cold reason, by the remembrance of bright days, and glowing amid the images that its own fancy has revived. Compare this, with the account of Borgia,† — a clear, cold, but powerful analysis, with a warm burst of enthusiastic feeling : — the one a detail of crimes supported by greater crimes, — the vices of a demon, triumphant over the vices of petty fiends, — the other a touching sketch of sweet days of peaceful virtue, whose heavenly influence his own dark age had never felt. Machiavelli's favorite character was Scipio, and he seems to contemplate his virtues with an unvaried and exhaustless delight. Cæsar, on the contrary, he boldly condemns as a selfish tyrant, whose great genius can only render his treachery more hateful. Clearly and strongly indeed, has he marked the line between those who have employed their talents and opportunities for the establishment of their own power, and those who have obeyed no other guide than their duty to their country.

Many works convey no idea of their author. The writer is lost in the story that he relates, or has nothing sufficiently peculiar in his cast of thought to impress the image of his mind upon its own creations. But Machiavelli, although he seldom speaks of himself, is constantly before the reader ; his spirit accompanies us through every page : at every step, we feel the presence of an observant and superior power, that will call us to account, for every thought and feeling that we indulge. Every action that he relates, contains a lesson, in every event swell the germs of some important principle : the mind is excited to constant and active exertion, and the reader must think as he reads, or cease to read.

Throughout the whole course of his life ‡ he was a con-

* 2. Op. Vol. IV. p. 60, et seq.

† 2. Op. Vol. V. p. 215, et seq.

‡ His veneration for literature was occasionally manifested in a very singular manner. During his long residence at his villa, after his release from prison, he usually devoted a portion of the day to the duties and amusements of the country, freely engaging in its sports, and sharing the debate,

stant disciple of the ancients. Their precepts were, in many points, the guides and directors of his actions, and their works the companions and consolation of his solitary hours. It was thus that he was enabled to give to his own writings the same species of charm, which distinguishes all the productions of ancient art.

As a student of the most important and interesting truths, he pursued a method, incapable, perhaps, of leading to the extensive discoveries of later philosophy, but free also from the subtleties and abstractions that have caused so much misery in modern Europe. Led both by natural disposition, and by the character of his studies, to the observation of individual acts and particular examples, he reached not the broadest principles of general legislation, but close, cautious and correct, in his reasoning, he seldom failed to establish some important truth of easy and universal application. Born in an age that had given free license to every species of corruption, and called, by duty to his country, to observe from a close point of view the darkest features of crime, the terrible reality that surrounded him left no room for the brighter dreams of imagination, and he has painted man as he had found him, and life as he himself had proved it, amid disappointed hopes and torture and exile. The duties of his station compelled him to fix his view upon the probable termination of every event, and hence he sometimes appears to have lost sight of the means, in an eager anticipation of the end; but it should be remembered that his mind was of that class, which, seeing with great clearness and deciding with perfect promptitude, pass rapidly over the comments and explanations, of which they cannot discover the importance. He united the keenest comic wit with the profoundest philosophical reflection, — the skill of the satirist with the gravity of the historian, — the warmth of poetic feeling with the shrewdness of political sagacity, and bringing into actual life the same versatility and apparent contradiction of character, — the pliant skill of an Italian diplomatist with the virtues of a faithful citizen, and the tenderness of an affectionate father and friend. In short, whether we consider him in his

and conversation of the neighboring rustics. But on his return at evenings his rustic dress was thrown aside, and, arraying himself in the more dignified robes of the courts, he entered his study and the presence of the philosophers and historians of old, with all the care and preparation which he had been accustomed to use in presenting himself to princes and ministers.

life, or in his works, we shall be constantly struck with the peculiar and strongly marked character of both, and be prepared to acknowledge that, if the "mind of man be indeed the proper study of mankind," few volumes contain a richer store of varied wisdom, than the life and the writings of Machiavelli.

ART. V. — *Life and Character of William Roscoe.*

The Life of William Roscoe. By his SON, HENRY ROSCOE. Boston. 1834.

THE most instructive chapter in the comprehensive records of philosophy, is example. There its principles are illustrated in action; its spirit typified in life. By this agency has the divine Being most perfectly revealed himself: and by it, in the moral economy of his universe, are the virtuous energies of humanity continually renewed. The happiest inspiration of which society is the source, is the influence diffused through it, in various attractive forms, by its most distinguished members. Coleridge has beautifully, and, with his accustomed significance, remarked, that "it is only by celestial observations that even terrestrial charts can be constructed scientifically." To gaze steadfastly at the intellectual and moral lights of the world, is at once the criterion and pledge of our own advancement; and in that constellation there are for all of us, some bright, particular stars, which, on account of their proximity to the region of our peculiar circumstances and sympathies, should be most earnestly and studiously regarded. The work now before us is peculiarly interesting in this country, as it furnishes the example of one who lived and died the active denizen of a commercial community like our own; of one whose native endowments were by no means brilliant, and whose circumstances, as far as they were prosperous, were created by himself; of one who, thus situated, nobly won and modestly wore the wreath of literary honor, the credit of self-denying probity, the name of a philanthropist; and who accomplished this by the simple but sublime energy of his character, by the "power of virtue in the human soul."